



Department of Justice

Office of Justice Programs



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VIOLENT CRIMES AND PROPERTY CRIMES REMAINED AT 30-YEAR LOWS IN 2004

WASHINGTON – Violent and property crime rates in 2004 remained at the lowest levels since the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) first conducted its annual National Criminal Victimization Survey in 1973, the Department of Justice announced today.

Though no significant declines were observed between 2003 and 2004, the average annual violent crime rates for the period 2003–2004 were lower than crime rates for the previous period 2001–2002.

The rate of every major violent and property crime measured by the survey (rape/sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, simple assault, burglary, theft, and motor vehicle theft) fell significantly between 1993 and 2004. Victimization rates for every major type of crime measured were unchanged from 2003 to 2004.

- From 1993 through 2004, the violent crime rate fell 57 percent and the property crime rate declined by 50 percent.
- The number of violent crimes decreased from an estimated 11 million in 1993 to 5.2 million in 2004.
- Since 1993, a decline in violent crime victimization has occurred across every racial and ethnic group, and income level measured.
- Preliminary murder estimates for 2004 from the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Reports indicate the number of murders decreased 3.6 percent from 2003. This is about the same per capita rate as that of the mid-1960s.
- Between the periods 2001–2002 and 2003–2004, violent crime declined for women, people in the West, and urban area residents.
- People who historically have been the most vulnerable to violent crime—males, blacks and youths—continued to be victimized at higher rates during 2004 than other resident groups, although all residents experienced lower criminal violence rates than those of prior years.

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During 2004 males were about as vulnerable to violence by strangers (50 percent of offenders were strangers) as by non-strangers (48 percent), while females were most often victimized by non-strangers (64 percent).

Firearm use in crimes has declined substantially during the last 10 years. In 1993, 11 percent of all non-lethal violent crimes were committed by an offender with a firearm, compared to 6 percent in 2004. The per capita rate of firearm victimization (1.4 per 1,000 victimizations) in 2004 represents a decline of more than two-thirds from the peak year in 1994 (6 per 1,000).

Reporting crimes to police grew from 43 percent of all violent crimes in 1993 to 50 percent in 2004. During the same period, property crime reporting increased from 34 percent to 39 percent. Growth in reporting varied by the type of crime. Aggravated assault and simple assault reporting remained stable between 2003 and 2004. Between 1993 and 2004 reporting to the police of theft increased.

The victimization survey is the nation's primary source of information about the frequency, characteristics, and consequences of personal victimization among individuals age 12 and older, and property crime in the United States. It has been conducted continuously since 1973. The report, "Criminal Victimization, 2004" (NCJ-210674), was written by BJS statistician Shannan M. Catalano. Following publication, the report can be found at: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/cv04.htm

Additional information about BJS statistical reports and programs is available from the BJS website at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs.

The Office of Justice Programs provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist victims. OJP is headed by an Assistant Attorney General and comprises five component bureaus and two offices: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; and the Office for Victims of Crime, as well as the Office of the Police Corps and Law Enforcement Education and the Community Capacity Development Office, which incorporates the Weed and Seed strategy and OJP's American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs Desk. More information can be found at www.ojp.usdoj.gov.

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